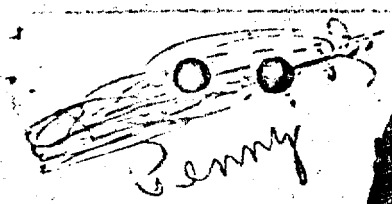


FIR-317/09085-73
[redacted]

Penny

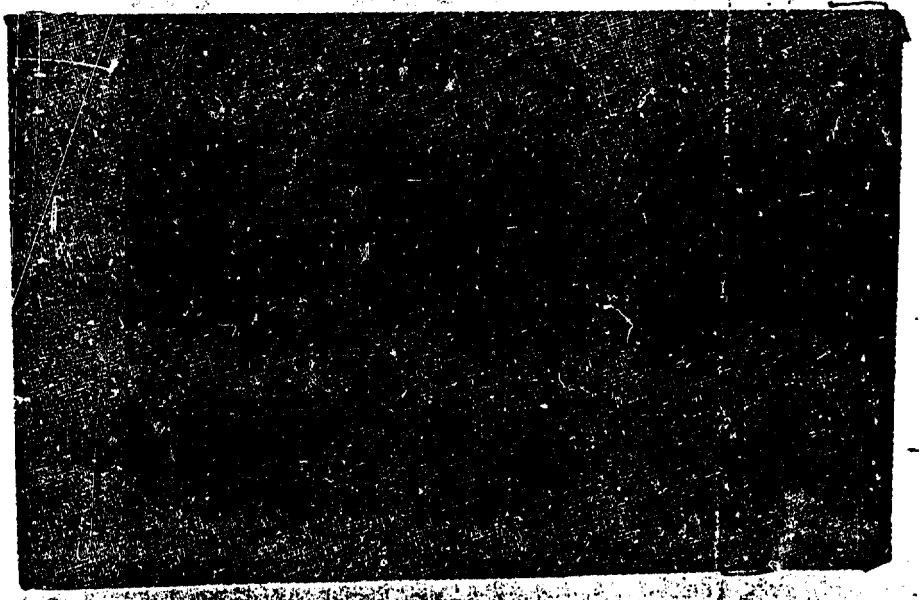
[redacted]

COUNTRY LAOS

DOI 27 MARCH 1971 - EARLY APRIL 1971

SUBJECT SIGHTING OF DOWNING OF EIGHT U.S. HELICOPTERS AND DEATH OF FOUR U.S. PILOTS IN SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE, LAOS

ACQ



SOURCE [redacted]

[redacted]

Encl 9 (S-47,601/DB-4H)

000110

#4

Dup #9

[redacted]

[redacted]

1. ABOUT 1200 HOURS ON 27 MARCH 1971, [redacted] BY A UNIT OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY (NVA) 591ST ARTILLERY REGIMENT. THE HELICOPTERS WERE BRINGING IN VIETNAMESE ARMY (ARVN) REINFORCEMENTS TO HILL 500. THE EIGHT HELICOPTERS APPROACHED HILL 500 FROM THE DIRECTION OF ROUTE 9. THREE WERE HIT BY ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY FIRE AS THEY DESCENDED TOWARD THE HILL; THE OTHER FIVE IMMEDIATELY STARTED FIRING ROCKETS AT THE ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY SITE AT THE BASE OF THE HILL BUT FAILED TO MAKE A HIT. A FEW MINUTES LATER, FOUR MORE HELICOPTERS WERE HIT BY ARTILLERY FIRE. THE REMAINING HELICOPTER FLEW OFF IN A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION TOWARD ROUTE 9, BUT RETURNED A FEW MINUTES LATER. IT WAS SHOT DOWN AS IT WAS DESCENDING. ALL EIGHT [redacted] THEY WERE ALL HIT BY CHINESE SINGLE BARREL 37MM ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY FIRE AT AN ALTITUDE BETWEEN 700 AND 1000 METERS. THE

NE-48-11,R,15,16

[redacted]

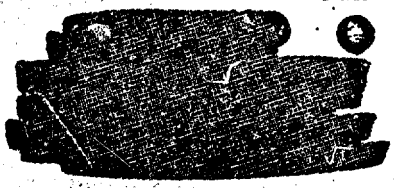
[redacted]

[redacted]

HELICOPTERS ALL CRASHED IN THE AREA OF A STREAM AT THE BASE OF HILL 500. A FEW MINUTES AFTER THE HELICOPTERS WERE DOWNED, ARVN TROOPS ON HILL 500 SHELLED THE ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY SITE BUT CAUSED NO CASUALTIES. [redacted] COMMENT: [redacted] WAS SHOWN PICTURES OF HELICOPTERS AND IDENTIFIED [redacted]

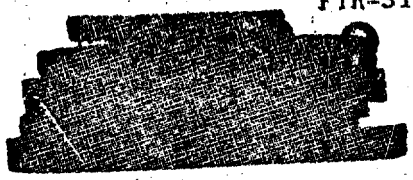
2. AT 1330 HOURS THE SAME DAY, [redacted] AND FOUR OTHERS WENT TO THE CRASH SITE. ONE U.S. CREW MEMBER WAS WOUNDED AND THREE WERE KILLED. A NUMBER OF ARVN SOLDIERS WERE ALSO KILLED. [redacted] SAW THE THREE DEAD CREW MEMBERS FROM A DISTANCE OF TEN METERS BUT WAS UNABLE TO GIVE A PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THEM. AFTER CHECKING THE AREA FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES THEY TOOK THE WOUNDED MAN TO THEIR UNIT TRUCK PARK, ABOUT 400 METERS FROM THE CRASH SITE. THEY REMOVED HIS BLACK LEATHER BOOTS AND TOOK HIM TO NVA HOSPITAL 42 D THE B-70TH MILITARY COMMAND HEADQUARTERS AT TALOY SLOPE [redacted], SAVANNAKHET PROVINCE. [redacted] PLATOON LEADER ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE HOSPITAL. WHEN THE PLATOON LEADER RETURNED TO HILL 500 AT ABOUT 1700 HOURS THAT DAY, HE SAID THAT THE AMERICAN HAD DIED EN ROUTE DUE TO LOSS OF BLOOD. [redacted] AN ASSISTANT PLATOON

[redacted]



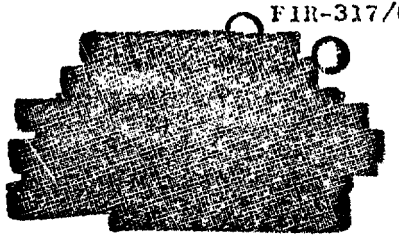
LEADER OF THE 25TH ENGINEERING BATTALION. TOLD [redacted] THAT THE AMERICAN WAS BURIED IN TALOY SLOPE NEAR THE HOSPITAL. HE WAS ABOUT 25 YEARS OLD, ABOUT 1.80 METERS TALL, AND WEIGHED ABOUT 90 KILOS. HE HAD A LIGHT COMPLEXION, A LONG FACE, AND SHORT HAIR. FASTENED TO EACH OF HIS ANKLES WAS A KNIFE IN A BLACK LEATHER SCABBARD. [redacted] TOOK THE FOLLOWING ITEMS FROM HIM: AN AUTOMATIC PISTOL, A ROUND WRISTWATCH WITH A BLACK FACE AND A BROWN LEATHER WATCHBAND, A ZIPPO LIGHTER, TWO PACKS OF CIGARETTES, AND A GOLD RING WITH A BLUE STONE THAT HAD A GOLD, HEARTSHAPED, METAL EMBLEM IN THE CENTER OF IT. [redacted] COMMENT: [redacted] WAS SHOWN BOTH VOLUMES OF PRISONERS OF WAR AND MISSING IN ACTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BUT WAS NOT ABLE TO MAKE AN IDENTIFICATION.)

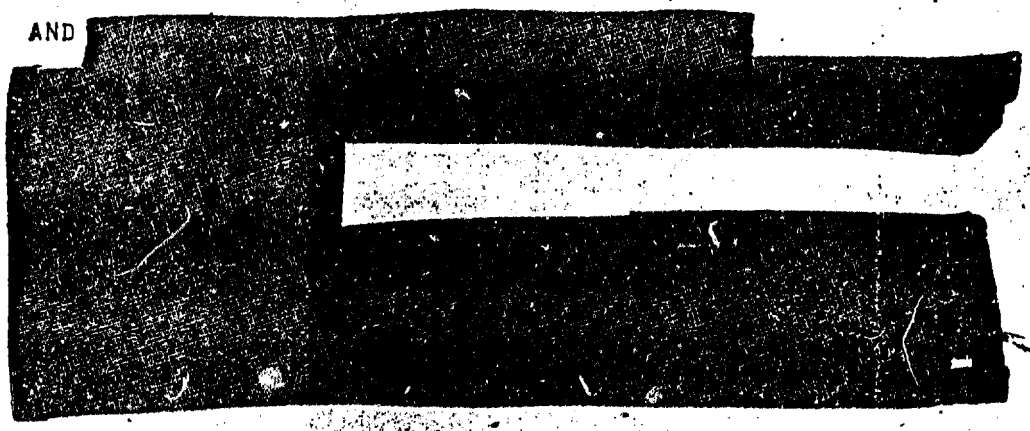
3. WHEN [redacted] PLATOON RETURNED TO HILL 500 ABOUT TEN DAYS LATER, HE SAW ABOUT 15 [redacted] GRAVES MARKED WITH 40 X 30 CENTIMETER SHEETS OF METAL AT THE FOOT OF HILL 500. THE WRITING ON THE MARKERS WAS IN YELLOW PAINT. ALL OF THE GRAVE MARKERS HAD "HIGH POINT 500" PAINTED ON THEM. THREE OF THE MARKERS HAD THE NUMBER "05" PAINTED ON THEM. THE 18TH BATTALION POLITICAL OFFICER SAID THE "05" WAS AN NVA



DESIGNATION FOR "U.S. FLYING PIRATES" AND [redacted] THOUGHT THESE WERE THE GRAVES OF THE THREE U.S. PILOTS HE HAD SEEN. VIETNAMESE NAMES WERE WRITTEN ON THE OTHER MARKERS AND [redacted] THOUGHT THESE WERE THE GRAVES OF THE ARVN SOLDIERS KILLED IN THE CRASHES.

4. [redacted] COMMENT: THE JOINT CASUALTY RESOLUTION CENTER (JCRC) EVALUATED THE REPORT AS FOLLOWS: INFORMATION AS PRESENTED PRECLUDES ANY DEFINITE CORRELATION. THE FOLLOWING FACTORS RESTRICT CORRELATION EFFORTS: (A) JCRC RECORDS INDICATE THAT DURING 1971 THE U.S. LOST A TOTAL OF TWELVE HELICOPTERS IN LAOS; NO CH-46'S WERE AMONG THE LOSSES. (B) ALL LOSSES OCCURRED APPROXIMATELY TEN MILES SOUTH OF THE REPORTED LOCATION ALONG ROUTE NINE; AND (C) THE U.S. NEVER LOST EIGHT HELICOPTERS AT ANY GIVEN TIME AND/OR AT ANY ONE LOCATION. JCRC RECORDS REVEAL THAT ON 30 JUNE 1970, MAJOR JOHN W. G O E G L E I N (JCRC NO. 6631), CAPTAIN LEROY S C H A N E B E R G (JCRC NO. 5766), MSGT PAUL L. J E N K I N S (JCRC NO. 5498), E-5 MICHAEL F. D E A N (JCRC NO.5354), AND E-5 MARVIN [redacted]. B E L L (JCRC NO. 5218) WERE FLYING IN USAF HH-53C RESCUE HELICOPTER (JOLLY GREEN GIANT) OVER EASTERN



LADS IN VICINITY OF BAN LANGH (XD 615596), WHICH IS APPROXIMATELY TWO MILES NORTHEAST OF REPORTED LOCATION, WHEN THEIR AIRCRAFT WAS HIT AND DOWNED BY AAA FIRE. THE INDIVIDUALS ARE LISTED AS KIA/BNR (BODY NOT RECOVERED). NO DEFINITE CORRELATION CAN BE MADE DUE TO NON-AVAILABILITY OF IDENTIFYING DATA AT THIS HQS.)

5. FIELD DISSEM: DEFENSE ATTACHE FOR JCRC REPRESENTATIVE IN SAIGON: SENT TO CINCPAC (FOR CINCPAC AND POLAD ONLY) USSAG AND